

# Nubi language

The **Nubi language** (also called **Ki-Nubi**) is a Sudanese Arabic-based creole language spoken in Uganda around Bombo, and in Kenya around Kibera, by the descendants of Emin Pasha's Sudanese soldiers who were settled there by the British colonial administration. It was spoken by about 15,000 people in Uganda in 1991 (according to the census), and an estimated 10,000 in Kenya; another source estimates about 50,000 speakers as of 2001. 90% of the lexicon derives from Arabic,<sup>[3]</sup> but the grammar has been simplified,<sup>[4]</sup> as has the sound system. Nairobi has the greatest concentration of Nubi speakers.<sup>[5]</sup> Nubi has the prefixing, suffixing and compounding processes also present in Arabic.<sup>[6]</sup>

The Nubi speakers are Kakwa who came from the Nubian region, first into Equatoria, and from there southwards into Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Idi Amin, who was Kakwa, recruited the Kawa and Nubians into his army, to kill the Acholi and Lango.<sup>[7]</sup><sup>[8]</sup>

Jonathan Owens argues that Nubi constitutes a major counterexample to Derek Bickerton's theories of creole language formation, showing "no more than a chance resemblance to Bickerton's universal creole features" despite fulfilling perfectly the historical conditions expected to lead to such features.

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Nubi Arabic	
<span></span> <div>Kinubi</div>	
Native to	Uganda, Kenya
Native speakers	44,300 <span> </span> (2009-2014) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	Arabic-based creole <div><div><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span><span> </span></div><div>▪<span> </span><b>Nubi Arabic</b></div></div>
Early form	Bimbashi Arabic
Writing system	Arabic
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	kcn
Glottolog	nubi1253 <span> </span> (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/nubi1253) <sup>[2]</sup>

## Grammar

### Phonology

#### Vowels<sup>[5]</sup><sup>[3]</sup>

There are five vowels in Nubi. Vowels are not distinguished by length except in at least two exceptions from Kenyan Nubi (which are not present in Ugandan dialects) where "*bara*" means "*outside*" and is an adverb while "*baara*" means "*the outside*" and is a noun, and also where "*saara*" meaning "*bewitch*" is compared to "*sara*" meaning "*herd, cattle*". Despite this, there is a tendency for vowels in stressed syllables to be registered as long vowels.<sup>[3]</sup>

	Front	Back
High	i	u
Mid	e	o
Low	a	

Each of the vowels has multiple allophones and the exact sound of the vowel depends on the surrounding consonants.<sup>[3]</sup>

#### Consonants<sup>[5]</sup><sup>[3]</sup>

		Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Retroflex	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosives	Voiceless	p			t				k	(q)		(ʔ)
	Voiced	b			d				g			
Nasals		m	(ɱ)		n			ɲ	(ŋ)			
Fricatives	Voiceless		f	(θ)	s		ʃ		(x)		(ħ)	h
	Voiced		v	(ð)	z							
Affricate	Voiceless						tʃ					
	Voiced						dʒ					
Trill/Flap					r	(ɾ)						
Lateral					l							
Approximant								j	w			

Speakers may use Standard Arabic phonemes for words for which the Arabic pronunciation has been learned. The a retroflex version of the /r/ sound may also occur and some dialects use /l/ in its place. Geminates are very unusual in Nubi. These less common phonemes are shown in brackets.<sup>[5] [3]</sup>

Ineke Wellens gives the following orthography for Nubi where it differs from the IPA symbols: /ʃ/ = sh; /tʃ/ = ch; /dʒ/ = j; /ɲ/ = ny; /w/ = w or u; /j/ = y or i; /θ/ = th; /ð/ = dh; /x/ = kh; /ħ/ = ḥ.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Syllable Structure

Syllables typically have a CV, VC, V or CVC structure with VC only occurring in initial syllables. Final and initial CC occur only in a few specific examples such as "*skul*" which means "*school*" or "*sems*" which means "*sun*".<sup>[5]</sup>

Stress can change the meaning of words for example "*saba*" means "*seven*" or "*morning*" depending on whether the stress is on the first or second syllables respectively. Vowels are often omitted in unstressed, final syllables and sometime even the stressed final "*u*" in the passive form may be deleted after "*m*", "*n*", "*l*", "*f*" or "*b*". This can caused syllables to be realigned even across words.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Nominals

Nouns are inflected by number only (taking a singular or plural form) although for most nouns this does not represent a morphological change. Jonathan Owens gives 5 broad inflectional categories of nouns:<sup>[5]</sup>

1. Nouns which undergo a stress shift when the plural is formed.
2. Nouns which undergo apophony.
3. Nouns which take a suffix and undergo a stress shift in the plural form.
4. Nouns which form the plural by suppletion
5. Bantu loan-words which take different prefixes in the singular and plural forms

The table below shows examples of each type of pluralisation. The apostrophe has been placed before the stressed syllable:<sup>[5]</sup>

Type of Pluralisation	Singular Form	Plural Form	English Translation
1	yo'wele	yowe'le	boy(s)
2	ke'bir	ku'bar	big [thing(s)]
3	'tajir	taji'rin	rich person(s)
3	'seder	sede'ra	tree(s)
4	'marya	nus'wan	woman / women <sup>1</sup>
5	muze	waze	old man / old men

<sup>1</sup>"Nuswan" may be supplemented by a suffix as if it were type 3, thus, "*nuswana*" could also mean "*women*".<sup>[5]</sup>

Adjectives follow the noun and some adjectives have singular and plural forms which must agree with the noun. Adjectives may also take the prefixes "*al*", "*ali*", "*ab*" or "*abu*" which mark them as habitual. When a noun is a possessor follow the possessed noun and is mark with the particle "*ta*" which is placed between the two nouns. The particle can be omitted in what are called inalienable possessed nouns where it is clear that the latter possesses the former.<sup>[5]</sup>

## See also

- Bimbashi Arabic

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